

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- From the President
- February Program
- Outgoing QSL Card Bundling
- Barefoot Chronicles
- January Minutes
- Treasurer's Report
- 2018 Budget Proposal

From the President

We had our first NADXC board meeting of 2018 on January 19th. We had discussion on each of the budget items for 2018 and came to a consensus. We even have a balanced budget that will be in this LongPath. I sure wish Congress could do the same thing. I was very pleased with some of the new ideas that were discussed. We may have an opportunity to have a better venue for our hamfest banquet at the Springhill Suites. I look forward to your feedback at this month's meeting on the potential change. The following data was collected by Kelley:

Springhill can almost match the Best Western:

\$200 for the room rental (same as BW)

\$19.95 per meal (same as BW) salad, rolls, butter

2 meats

1 veggie (down from 2 at BW)

1 starch

dessert

iced tea, water, coffee

Springhill charges 22% service/gratuity; Best Western's rate is 18%. Springhill can accommodate 120 (or more). Best Western is cramped at 100. I am encouraged by how much closer it is to the hamfest. Some people could walk to it. I would also like to see us grow the attendance. This will give us 20 more seats.

Kelley is going to take on a significant leadership position with the Huntsville Hamfest by doing their finances. I am sure she will also do a great job for them. I am very pleased she is going to continue to be our Secretary/Treasurer, but we will need to have some volunteers to perform the banquet host and other functions.

I was very pleased that Stephen Smith volunteered to do the bundling of QSL cards for the ARRL Outgoing Bureau. This will save our members money and could attract new members. I was also happy Chuck Lewis volunteered to do the research on the club Honor Roll Plaques. These have not been updated for many years and serve as a legacy for members.

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How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call Tom Duncan at (256)705-2147

FT8—Not Your Father's Digital Mode

February Program by Stephen Smith, KK4TJP

FT8 is very useful for making DX contacts when band conditions are poor or signals are very weak. This digital mode concentrates on efficiently exchanging basic information required for a minimalist QSO to include: call signs, Maidenhead grid locators, signal reports, and acknowledgements at very low signal-to-noise ratios in the space of about a minute to a minute and a half. Come hear what all the fuss is about, the equipment needed, and essential tips and tricks that will help you enjoy this new mode.

Get to the Golden Corral around 6:00 for dinner, 7:00 for the business meeting, and 7:30 for Stephen's presentation.



NADXC Outgoing QSL Card Bundling

By Stephen Smith, KK4TJP

Are you bummed out by the new higher prices charged by the ARRL for outgoing QSL service? Loosing sleep over those return QSLs for ON4UN? We have just the cure for QSO-induced depression and insomnia—read on.

We are now providing ARRL Outgoing QSL card bundling for our members who are also ARRL members! Bring your

QSL cards to any meeting. The fee for adding to the Club's outgoing bundle is \$3 for the 1st ounce (about 8 cards), and \$2 for each additional ounce. You must also provide proof of your current ARRL membership to submit with the cards. Please alphabetize your cards and find Stephen KK4TJP to submit the cards and payment.

The LongPath Staff

Publisher/Editor:

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Departments:

Chuck Lewis, N4NM, DX Contests

Kelley Vann-Johns, W4VPZ, Minutes

Steve Werner, AG4W, From the President

Craig Behrens, NM4T, The Barefoot Chronicles

From the President

(cont'd from p. 1)



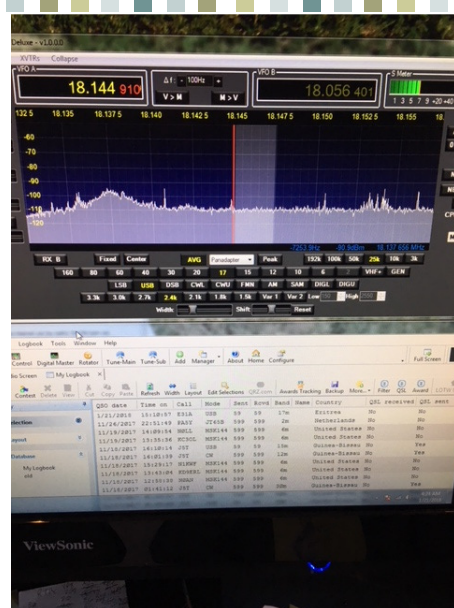
I am glad Kosovo has been made a new DXCC entity, assigned the Z6 prefix. One of the things that always intrigued me about ham radio is that it has not been used as a negative political tool. Even at the height of the cold war you could work Russia and get a card from PO Box 88, Moscow. It was fun working Z60A on 6 bands and all 3 modes. They sure gave the Europeans a head start. Only 20 percent of their QSOs have been with North America.

Dave Thompson, K4JRB recently resigned as the SE Division DX Advisory Committee member. Greg Sarratt would like to ask the NADXC leadership to give him a recommendation for consideration for the new Southeastern Division DX Advisory Committee mem-

ber. He also plans to ask SEDXC, FCG and ACG for a recommendation. I will also bring this up for discussion at this month's club meeting.

I got my LP-Pan working (above right) with HRD using NaP3. I'm using my FT-5000 and a new Xonar U5 audio interface.

I was very excited about the Bouvet team leaving port and arriving at Bouvet. Bouvet is one of the last 7 countries I need. Unfortunately we will not see the NADXC banner up in Bouvet. They had to abort the DXpedition due to safety concerns related to the ships engine. They are headed home via South Africa. A Polish expedition to Bouvet that was cancelled due to 3Y0Z is now planning to go forward later this



year with the call 3Y0I.

I enjoyed both the RTTY Roundup and the CQ 160M CW contest in January. Since I downloaded all the contacts into LOTW they count for this year's ARRL grid square competition. So far I've been in the top 10 in Alabama.

I look forward to Stephen Smith's presentation on FT8 DX this month at the club meeting. All you need to do is look at 1840 and see the level of activity and it looks like the wild west. I found a FT8 Operating Guide by ZL2IFB that is very good. I hope everyone gets some training before a major DXpedition uses FT8.

73,

Steve AG4W

Follow-Up

We enjoyed several conversations about the first **Barefoot Chronicles** column at our January club meeting, but I had no emails to respond to.

Working DX

Let's begin a two-fold conversation that looks at how to be (wildly) successful with your low power DXing efforts while having an extraordinary amount of fun in the process.

For sure, this is like walking a tight-rope. Without a balanced approach, you might fall off to the right by spending all your time (and energy) trying to exploit all the radio and Internet automation tools now available. Or, you might fall off to the left by not capturing the core information you need to create opportunities to apply excellent operating skills to successfully stalk and capture your DX prey.

We know that some folks like to shoot fish in a barrel, to quickly check countries off their list with as little personal investment as possible. Others of us, however, prefer to savor the adventure. We want to learn all we can about this amazing world of DXing along the way.

In either case – the ARRL's Logbook of the World has become an effective tool for tracking contact confirmations and for maintaining a master log.

One strategy for working DX stations might be to operate QRP at first (when conditions permit) and then to crank your rig up to 100 watts as time begins to run out on a DXpedition.

Another might be to run 100 watts to get that first contact in the bag (might want to get an insurance contact too) and then to drop down to QRP levels to make additional contacts.

At any rate, I know from multiple experiences that one can work 100 countries with 5 watts in less than a year with simple wire antenna (or two). And, as band conditions improve in this solar cycle, one will be able to work 100 countries in a weekend by participating in major contest events.

Here's a cautionary note: Us low power guys need to know when to use DX Alert tools and when to avoid them. For major DXpeditions, especially early in their operation days – such tools are often the bane for guys like us. A moment after you hit the "Enter" key you soon discover that a hundred other guys have also jumped in, many of them operating with a lot more power. This can be painful and self-defeating if not managed well. On the other hand, used correctly, this capability can provide pertinent, real-time information that can help you come up with a winning DX stalking strategy.

Quality of DXpeditions

It doesn't take much DX chasing experience to establish that all DXpeditions are not created equal. Some are significantly better than others.

The **How's DX?** Column in the February 2018 QST takes a hard look at "**DXpedition Pet Peeves**," what DXpeditions don't always do adequately. (I recommend that you read their findings and comments. Then, invest a little time relating this to the DXing experiences you have encountered On-the-Air so you can be more effective in your future activities.)

The top three DXpedition peeves their survey revealed are: "not knowing propagation differences around the globe, not identifying the split range and failing to identify."

Although us DXers must deal with whatever conditions exist – we soon realize the difference between DXpeditions that are not managed well vs. those that spend most of their time fairly and effectively distributing contacts while operating "in the DXing Zone."

We can also determine much from the DX's operating patterns via research and from careful listening to what they do during their first few days of operation. Boiling this down usually defines the "what, when and how" we need to know to have our best chance for working the DXpeditions.

Whether the best or worst DX operation, the one key thing that we absolutely do not want to do is to contribute to the Deliberate QRP (DQRM), that we detest hearing – another reason that we listen, listen and listen – first.

I'll add a couple items to this list: When a DX station does not enforce "fill" requests and when QRP stations add "/QRP" to the end of their calls.

If the DX hears part of your call (we'll use mine for this), and comes back with a request for "November Mexico," many DX chasers will often jump in while the volume of the "DX buzz" is reduced. You will often hear some calls with an "N" or "M" as well as many calls without either letter in their call. This is when the DX station has to enforce his request for "NM" only. When he does, the gang will soon figure out that he means business and they will comply.

With CW, the best stations will send "NM? KN" and will repeat this until everyone else shuts up except the NM station. This is one tactic a DX station must do to take control of a pileup and make it manageable. (Sometimes, the DX Cops will help with this.)

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Regarding QRP stations – most DXpeditions, as a matter of policy, don't log /QRP, because it does not form part of a legal call sign in any country. And, I am not aware of any QRP contests, expeditions or awards that require a /QRP suffix.

Effective Operating Skills

Now, getting back to us low power operators, let's assume that most of us don't have amplifiers for those times you when you just can't get a DX entity without one. What can we do to compensate (other than guest Op at a mega-station)?

(Note: It is also a given that there are times when even the biggest stations can't work DX stations.)

So let's take a look at superior operating and well-informed DX stalking skills – what works and what doesn't.

When I first joined the NADXC in the early 1990's, a fine gentleman, Dan Whitsett, **W4BRE**, gave me a copy of *The Complete DX'er* by Bob Locher, **W9KNI**. This was back in the days when we didn't do anything with the Internet. We used telephones, our 2-meter repeater and packet radios to communicate.

If you haven't read this book – I highly recommend that you get a copy and read it ASAP. Then re-think what the essence of successful DXing is vs. what you might be doing. And, if you're serious about working DX – being part of the NADXC will serve you well. (I've learned more about amateur radio technology and the art of DXing here than from any other venue.)

As you might suspect – there are many processes and techniques we DXers use to find and snag really juicy and allusive DX. I'll mention a few.

When is the last time you started at one end of the band and looked at every station operating? Anyone DX? If so – is it a new entity for you and can you work it? Or, how often have you tried calling "CQ DX" when the band doesn't seem to have much activity? Especially do this when all indications are that the propagation for that band is "open."

You might be surprised! (Especially when collecting band-countries.)

Or, have you identified some DX prey and done due diligence to come up with a really good "game plan?" This plan must include specifics from reading the DX bulletins and checking-out the propagation forecasts. For example, there is a big difference between the propagation window timing for W1 vs. W6 stations. So you will need to figure out when the DX station will be passing out QSO's for the U.S. that can work for you?

Also keep in mind that us low power operators might have a good chance to make contact if/when a DX station limits responses by call areas. And, they might even provide time for QRP and/or those who are running "barefoot."

Most often, we have to find ways to be there first, before the word gets out, or last, after most of the big guys have worked the DX station.

This said, DXpeditions and the DX contest super stations are often so effective at burning down pileups that they end up begging for QSO's near the end of a contest period.

Believe it or not -- you can often create "non-advertised" DX opportunities. For example, besides operating low power on the fringes during major DX contests -- you could try stalking major DX just before and after they participate in those events. Here, you will often hear them passing out some low-

pressure contacts and even doing a little rag chewing. They might want your opinion as to signal strengths, how good their audio is, where your QTH is located and what kind of station you are using, etc.

And, these operators will often operate on the WARC bands (30, 17, 12) that are not available for operation in the contest itself.

This said -- we often snag contacts via superior operating skills. It's true that savvy DX stations often pick better operators over higher power level stations in pile-ups. They want stations that are in sync with their exchange and that get it right the first time.

For example, the timing for transmitting your call letters is critical. It's not likely in big pile-ups that you will be successful at being the quickest, the first guy to transmit your call when the DX says QRZ. You might get a letter or two out before your call sign is buried alive.

So, you look for lulls in the cacophony of calls being transmitted and/or you try to overlap your call by having the last two or 3 letters of your call sign be present when the pile-up tappers off.

Another technique that we low power guys employ when the pileup is huge is to transmit slightly higher in frequency than the main pile or the last station he just worked. DX stations will often explore the upper edge of a pileup when they are unable to pick out calls from the main section of it. This is where clever low power operators and QRPers can often steal a QSO from the QRO stations.

Much has been written about breaking pile-ups and the pros and cons of "tail ending" techniques. Talking to our Honor Roll NADXC DX experts is certain-

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ly a good place to gain advice and practical knowledge concerning such "DXing finesse."

Knowing and appreciating DX Heroes

I'm sure that many of you could add volumes to this starter conversation about the art of DXing, but I'll close by suggesting one more way to increase your success rate and to further enrich your DXing experience: Know all you can about the people that makes this possible, support their operating plan and learn what you can about each DX operator better than the casual operators do.

For example, here's an interesting Podcast featuring **Hal Turley, W8HC**, a veteran DXpeditioner who will be operating as part of the upcoming Bouvet **3Y0Z** team at the most remote island and DX entity in the world. The **QSO Today** link is:

https://secure-hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/4/e/f/4ef3fca2961aeb29/Episode_176_Hal_Turley_W8HC_Final.mp3?c_id=18215667&expiration=1517761588&hwt=b16e806889ff5035b5b0541ddc106fa6

(**Note:** You might have to cut and paste this link.)

Besides discussing the preparation activities for this expedition, Hal talks about what it takes to get 9-band DXCC with 100 watts, DXing the low-bands via remote, how amazing DXing is with current technology, that the **FT8** mode will be used at Bouvet, as well as what operating skills work well with DXpeditioning.

Hal said "this will be "a once-in-a-lifetime expedition (for him) with the best of the best . . . This expedition has all the superlatives." "It is the Mount Everest of DXpeditions."

This is an amazing Podcast to hear!

Note: As I finished proofing this column, we just received news that the Bouvet team had to abort this DXpedition due to prolonged bad weather and a problem with one of the ship's engines. I can't imagine how they must feel and I pray that they get home safely.

That's it for now. Hopefully, I've provided some ideas that you will want to pursue to expand and improve your operating capabilities.

Next month...

I plan to discuss chasing DX and being DX with "Get-in/Get-Out" portable operations.

I have found that one of the best and most fun ways to make your 5 or 100 watts seem more potent is to operate near saltwater or from a cliff's edge.

It's amazing how effective an operation can be when running off batteries and solar panels from an electrically quiet site!

And, we'll take a look at how to become DX via special operational activities, such as this year's ARRL's Grid Square contest.

See you on the radio and at our February meeting.

72/73 & DX,

Craig—NM4T

P.S. – I still have access to an **ICOM IC-7610** for those who would like to take it for a spin either "hands-on" or via remote control.

Please send your comments and/or questions to me via

craigb44@msn.com

January 9, 2018 Meeting Minutes

By Kelley Johns, W4VPZ, NADXC Secretary/Treasurer

Attendees

Members 20 and guests 1, who was voted into membership.

Review of Sign-in Sheet & DX worked

Tom KG4CUY	All Q-Track
Bob K8KI	A25TD Bhutan
Mark N4BCD	N3KN in grid chase @0130z 1/1/18
MD WA4DXP	Russia

Stephen KK4TJP 5V, FR5, RI1ANO

Bruce AC4G 60, VU (30m), B62 (30m), JW2 (40m)

Announcements

Happy New Year!

The 10m contest was tough. The RTTY Roundup 15m propagation was rough, although 20m was good to Europe and Japan. Bouvet will be activating in about 2 weeks. The Grid Square

Chase will be good to get the HF bands more active.

Anticipated programs for 2018 are:

January	DVD of the Peter I dexpedition – conditions are similar to Bouvet – Rob KB5EZ
February	FT8 digital DXing – Stephen KK4TJP

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January Meeting Minutes

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March	Antarctic Dxpedition – James Carey AI4LX	The treasurer's report was approved by the membership.
April	SDR – Bob K8KI	A Club proposed budget for 2018 will be published in the next LongPath for discussion at the February meeting.
May	Sporadic E on 6m – Tim AB4B	President Steve AG4W plans on a break-even budget and hopes to grow the membership of the club in the coming year(s) by getting the word out on meeting programs and attracting all levels of DXers.
June	EME Moonbounce – Steve AG4W (or K4AB's CQWWCW)	
July	WRTC 2014 DVD – Rob KB5EZ	
August	Hamfest Program Preview – Tom KG4CUY	Membership Applications
September	TBD	Kim WG8S was unanimously voted in to membership.
October	LDMOS Finals – Bob K8KI	Welcome, Kim!
November	TBD	Old Business
December	Christmas Dinner	None.
		New Business

Treasurer's Report for December

Beginning Balance	\$ 4,247.77
Debits	
Web Site Hosting-\$ 59.40	
Banner for Bouvet	-\$ 16.88
Donation to Baker Island	-\$ 300.00
DXer of the Year Plaque	-\$ 46.86
Ending Balance	\$ 3,824.63

The Club will begin aggregating members' QSL cards to submit to the ARRL's Outgoing Bureau. Stephen KK4TJP will be the contact for this. To participate, you must submit proof of your ARRL membership with your alphabetized cards. The Club member fee will be \$3 for the first ounce (~8 cards), and \$2 for each additional ounce.

Some undated DXCC Honor Roll plaques belonging to the Club have surfaced. Chuck N4NM will work on sorting out the history on them – who is

missing and needs to be added. The Club members voted to pursue the updating.

The meeting was adjourned and was followed by the January program, a video on the Peter I DXpedition, where conditions were very similar to those for the upcoming Bouvet Island DXpedition.

As we anxiously anticipate the megapileups which will form during the upcoming Bouvet 3Y0Z DXpedition, let's look back on the 3Y0X Peter I party in 2006. On a similar but slightly less remote ice-covered island near Antarctica, Peter I is a good analog to Bouvet. Some of the same players are going back for more wind-blown, icy adventure. It is always interesting to think about what those folks are going through when we are wrestling the rest of the world to get through.

NADXC Officers and Directors

President	Steve Werner, AG4W
Vice President	Rob Suggs, KB5EZ
Secretary/	Kelley Vann-Johns, W4VPZ
Treasurer	
At-large	Kevin Hibbs, KG4TEI
Directors	Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Treasurer's Report for January, 2018

By Kelley Johns, W4VPZ, NADXC Secretary/Treasurer

Beginning Balance	\$ 3,824.63	PayPal Deposit	\$ 160.30
		Deposit	\$
		100.80	
Debits		PayPal Deposit	\$ 95.19
Repeater Power Bill (2017)	-\$ 80.00	Deposit	\$15.00
Credits (all were dues payments)		Ending Balance	\$ 4,483.07
PayPal Deposit	\$ 301.35		
Deposit	\$ 65.80		

Proposed 2018 Budget

By Kelley Johns, W4VPZ, NADXC Secretary/Treasurer

Shown below is the proposed 2018 budget, based on our directors meeting held on January 19. All members are urged to review this. We will discuss this as the major item of business at Tuesday's meeting, and bring the budget, possibly amended, to a vote.

PROPOSED North Alabama DX Club 2018 Budget				
Item	Description	Income	Expense	Bank Balance
1	Current Bank Account Balance 1/1/18			\$ 3,623.49
2	Dues receipts (est. 50 members @ \$15 each)	\$ 650.00		\$ 4,273.49
3	Repeater Power Bill (Janet Richardson)		\$ (80.00)	\$ 4,193.49
4	Repeater maintenance		\$ (100.00)	\$ 4,093.49
5	Annual Web Hosting and Domain Service		\$ (72.72)	\$ 4,020.77
6	DXpedition Sponsorship		\$ 550.00	\$ 4,570.77
7	Young Ham of the Year Plaque		\$ (46.86)	\$ 4,523.91
8	Annual DX Club Banquet Receipts (est.)	\$ 3,990.00		\$ 8,513.91
9	Annual DX Club Banquet Expenses** - venue & meal		\$ (3,500.00)	\$ 5,013.91
10	Hamfest Banquet Door Prizes		\$ (500.00)	\$ 4,513.91
11	DX Banquet Speaker Expenses		\$ (300.00)	\$ 4,213.91
12	Matching of member contributions to ARRL Spectrum Defense Fund		\$ (100.00)	\$ 4,113.91
13	Annual Club Picnic		\$ (25.00)	\$ 4,088.91
14	Plaque, DXer of the year		\$ (46.86)	\$ 4,042.05
15	Speaker Fund		\$ (100.00)	\$ 3,942.05
16	Incorporation*		\$ (200.00)	\$ 3,742.05
17	Name Reservation with Alabama Secretary of State		\$ (28.00)	\$ 3,714.05
18	QSL Service		\$ (20.00)	\$ 3,694.05
19	DX Honor Roll Plaque Refurbishment		\$ (50.00)	\$ 3,644.05
	Summary	\$ 4,640.00	\$ (4,619.44)	
	Net Difference in Bank Balance			\$ 20.56
	*Donation 2/9/16 of \$200 to the club earmarked for incorporation expenses			
	** Estimate -- written proposal is pending			